

Margaret Eustis House
114 Oxford Street
Landmark Designation Study Report
L-66

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Cambridge Historical Commission
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Executive Summary

The Margaret Eustis House is a locally rare and substantially intact example of the rear-wall chimney Federal house, constructed in 1822 and preserved through relocation in 1863, and for its associations with the Eustis family in Cambridge and with Margaret, Abraham and Henry Lawrence Eustis in particular. The house is also historically and architecturally significant in terms of its period, style and method of construction, as one of a small number of heavy-timber-framed Federal period houses surviving in Cambridge. It meets criteria (1) and (2) of the Chapter 2.78, Article III of the Cambridge City Code and was recommended for designation by the Cambridge Historical Commission at a public hearing held October 2, 2003.

Location and Economic Status

A. Address, Parcel Number and Zoning

The Margaret Eustis House, built in 1822 on Massachusetts Avenue opposite Cambridge Common and moved in 1861 to its current site, is located at 114 Oxford Street at the northeast corner of Oxford and Eustis streets. The parcel is identified as lots 89 and 110 of map 151. The lot contains 6,664 square feet. It is recorded in book 38975, page 73 of the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds.

The property is zoned C-1, a multi-family residential zone with an FAR of .75 and a height limit of 35'. The zone allows for a variety of residential and institutional uses, including single, two-family and multi-family use as of right; transient tourist, townhouse, and congregate housing use with a special permit; and religious, healthcare, or educational uses under the Institutional Use Regulations.

The existing structures (the house and an 1881 carriage barn on the property) have a combined FAR of approximately .44, allowing for approximately 2000 square feet of additional construction on the lot. The lot area would also allow four dwelling units on the property, but it is unclear whether parking and usable open space requirements could be met if all the allowable units were to be realized. Because of the placement of the structures on the lot, the property is substantially non-conforming as to the rear and side yard setbacks (on the carriage house side). Thus, any additional construction on the property would require zoning relief in the form of variances from the allowable dimensional requirements.

Although it is currently an accessory garage structure, the carriage house could be converted to dwelling space within the allowable minimum lot area and FAR for the property. Conversion of the carriage house from accessory to residential use would have to meet all other dimensional requirements for the property and would also require Planning Board review for a Special Permit under section 5.28.2 of the city zoning code.

B. Ownership and Occupancy

The property is owned by M & B Realty Trust, a development entity that purchased the property in 2003 from Jason Korb and Carol Korb Sachs, legatees of Allan and Myne Korb. The property is currently unoccupied and undergoing renovations that have been reviewed and approved by the Cambridge Historical Commission in case 1412. The developer is renovating the house for sale as a single-family residence.

As part of the renovations, the house has been stripped of mid-20th century finishes (including aluminum siding, an enclosed front porch, and replacement sash) and has been gutted to the walls in much of the interior (with the exception of original finishes in the front rooms of the main house on both the first and second floors; see Description for further information). Original clapboards are being retained and replaced in kind where necessary, the windows are being replaced in their original openings, the footprint of the original house is unchanged, and the carriage house is being repaired.

The house was constructed as a single-family residence and was most recently occupied as a single-family residence with an accessory apartment. The main structure is an 1822 house that originally stood at 1531 Massachusetts Avenue opposite the Common; it was moved to its present site in 1863, at which time it appears to have been converted to use as a double house. The house was shown in the 1873 atlas with two addresses (112 and 114 Oxford Street) and was occupied as a double house through the 1940s; assessing records also list the property with two lot numbers, further corroborating an early history as a double house on this site. In 1947, the house appears to have been returned to single-family use when alterations to remove interior partitions were permitted (building permit #46843). It is not clear when an accessory apartment at the rear of the property in an ell was constructed, but it may also date from the moment when the main house was returned to its single-family floor plan.

Building permit records indicate that additional permits were issued for installation of new windows and siding (building permit #46886, 9/19/1947) and for installation of aluminum siding (building permit #61358, 2/5/1962).

C. Area Description

The Margaret Eustis House stands in a densely-built up section of the Agassiz neighborhood, which is characterized by a mix of single-family and multi-family dwellings, including three-deckers and frame apartment blocks. The Agassiz neighborhood borders the Somerville city line in the north-central section of the city.

The house is located on the northeast corner of Eustis Street and Oxford Street, one block north of a small commercial node at the intersection of Oxford and Sacramento streets opposite the Agassiz School and the Oxford Street playground. Opposite the house to the west is the Garfield Street National Register district, a collection of large, elaborate Queen Anne single-family houses that is one of the city's most cohesive examples of that architectural style.

The intersection of Eustis/Garfield and Oxford streets is a relatively heavily-trafficked location, as it mixes east-bound traffic from Massachusetts Avenue heading for Beacon Street in Somerville (two blocks east of the Eustis House) with traffic moving north and south between Porter Square and Harvard Square along Oxford Street, a secondary artery that absorbs overflow traffic from Massachusetts Avenue.

The Eustis House, a comparatively small building on a comparatively large, open lot, contrasts with its near neighbors, nearly all of which are larger, early 20th-century multi-family structures that fill their lots. Some have been converted to condominium uses, but many are still rental properties and the neighborhood has a comparatively high percentage of renters.

D. Planning Issues

Planning concerns for the Margaret Eustis House relate primarily to its current transitional status. It was vacant and in the hands of the heirs of its most recent owner/occupant when the Cambridge Historical Commission voted to initiate landmark proceedings on September 5, 2002 after receiving inquiries from real estate offices about the possible sale of the property. The Commission affirmed that vote at a public hearing held on October 3, 2002.

The allowable zoning requirements in the C-1 zone, the presence of additional development potential on the site, and Cambridge's escalating housing market will continue to put pressure on the property to be developed as fully as possible. Landmark designation study has enabled the review of the current renovations by the Historical Commission and ensured the preservation of the property through this ownership transition. The developers have not chosen to seek dimensional relief to capture the full development potential on the site, but it is likely future owners may wish to take advantage of all of the remaining capacity or to make further modifications to the house or barn.

E. Map

II. Description

A. Type and Use

The Margaret Eustis House is a wood-frame residence with a three-car garage in an accessory building. The main house has been owner occupied for many years with an accessory apartment rented to tenants. It is under renovation to be returned exclusively to single-family use.

B. Physical Description

The Margaret Eustis House, constructed in 1822 at 1531 Massachusetts Avenue and moved to this location in 1863, is a five-bay wide by two-bay deep, two-story Federal house with a gable roof and a pair of two-story rear ells. The center entrance was for many years shielded behind a screened portico of modern construction with Tuscan columns and a second-story balustrade. The porch has been removed under alterations approved by the Historical Commission, exposing the original entrance surround and entablature.

The house was for 40 years sheathed in aluminum siding (installed 1962, building permit #61358) and had replacement 6/6 double hung sash installed in 1947 (building permit #46886). Because the house was moved, its original chimney stacks do not remain and only one of the two interior rear-wall chimneys original to the structure was rebuilt; it rises on the left side of the house, behind the gable ridge. Also on the property is a one-and-a-half story carriage barn, three bays wide, with a hayloft dormer and a hip-roofed cupola centered on the gabled roof; tax records indicate it was constructed in 1881 but it may have been built in 1871 (see below).

The house is set 25' back from Oxford Street behind fieldstone retaining walls (rebuilt in 2003) and a front lawn planted with floral borders. The carriage house is accessed via a shared curb cut with the adjacent house at 116-118 Oxford Street and a broad asphalt-paved driveway and parking area occupies most of the north side yard. The south side yard is planted with a garden; the rear lot line is approximately 10' off the back wall of the house.

Despite the move and several sequences of alterations, the essential features of the original Federal design remain evident. The massing and plan of the house, and its fenestration and roof shape, convey its antiquity most clearly. Typical features of the Federal period include the five-bay, center-entrance plan, shallow-pitched gable roof, rear wall chimney(s), symmetrical window placement, and the comparatively small scale of the house.

Among the original exterior details present on the main house are the rake mouldings on the end gables, the cornice, many of the original cedar clapboards (with skived joints and applied with graduated exposures, the narrowest at the foundation and increasing to approximately 4" to the weather higher on the walls), and the original entrance, with full-length sidelights, flat pilasters, a simple entablature, and the original six-panel door. A

single original 6/6 sash, with knife-edge muntins, survived prior to the present renovations in place at the second-floor of the ell on the north elevation.

In addition to the main two-bay-by-five-bay structure, the house includes a pair of two-story rear ells. On the south side the ell is two-stories tall and only one bay wide, with a gable roof. Prior to the current renovations, it had a small chimney at the peak of the gable, just inside the rear wall. The north side ell is larger, two-and-a-half stories tall and two bays wide, and somewhat longer than the south side ell. At some point, a space between the two ells was filled in with a two-story, shed-roofed section. The east (rear) wall was further extended when an outhouse on that wall was enclosed in an angled, one-story glassed-in porch. The one-hole outhouse structure in the north ell has survived as a small closet.

The ells' construction history cannot be fully clarified in the atlases and Engineering Department House Books (see attached illustrations). The earliest depiction of the footprint is an August 23, 1870 sketch (House Book 1, page 25) that shows the main house with dimensions of 35.6' x 38.4'. The south half of the house had a small rear stoop (2.9' x 3.3') as well as a side entrance stoop centered on the south elevation (3.8' x 5.6'). The north ell was 17.4' wide and projected 2.9' beyond the east wall; it lengthened the north side elevation to 38.5'.

At some time between 1870 and 1896 (probably in 1896 when the drawing in House Book 39, page 61 was made, although no building permit for the alteration was located), a 7.1' x 19.5' projecting addition, which no longer exists, was added on the north wall at the northeast corner. That addition, which was in all likelihood a one-story porch, remained as late as 1930. It was subsequently removed so that the current dimensions of the house are roughly 35' x 30'.

It is not possible to determine the exact sequence or date of alterations to the rear service areas or what the ell configuration of the house in its original location might have been. On the north side, the roof framing adjacent to the chimney stack includes a principal rafter mortised for purlins that would once have supported the sheathing and shingles of an exposed rear roof slope. This suggests that any ell present in the original 1822 construction was lower than the eave of the two-story main house. It can be conjectured then that the ells now on the house are largely or entirely structures that post-date the 1863 move and the conversion of the house from single-family to two-family use.

In the current renovation, the developers have retained some elements of the interior of the house, which though outside the scope of this designation, nonetheless contribute to the significance of the structure. Among the relevant Federal-period details of the interior that have been preserved are the essential form of the floor plan of the main house, with a center hall and two large rooms on each floor of the main house. The developers have also preserved the southeast corner rooms on the first and second floors, which include recessed windows with shutters on the first floor; original four-panel doors; window and door casings, baseboards and dados; and timber-frame elements, including cased corner posts in the main rooms on the first floor; and cased corner posts

and a cased front plate on the second floor. Not surprisingly, given the fact that the original chimneys were not rebuilt when the house was moved, there are no Federal-period mantels or chimneypieces in the house.

In 1947, a number of renovations were made to the interior to reinstate the single-family character of the main house. In style, these were Colonial Revival in character and were probably intended to “restore” the house, but they tended to mask the authentic Federal-period elements. Building permit #48843, issued September 15, 1947, described the changes to the ground floor to “Enlarge living room by removing partition. Replace worn sash. Remove three doors and build archway.”

The floor plan of the two main first-floor rooms, which has been retained in the current renovation, dates from these 1947 alterations, which created a shallow elliptical archway into the north parlor and removed the entrance hall partition-wall into the south parlor, opening the stairway into that space. A patched section of flooring just inside the entrance indicated where the original partition-wall of the south parlor was removed in 1947. The central stair was also altered to open on the south side with a pair of Tuscan columns at the base (see Interior Photographs, 2003).

Based on the 1947 renovation, it is possible to speculate that the conversion of the house to a double house in 1863 created separate unit entrances off an interior vestibule inside the original main entrance, which remained intact. In the original plan, the stairway also probably ran against the south wall and opened into the hall passage, which is on the north side of the house. It seems likely then that the 1947 alterations reversed the stairway opening, bringing the stair into the south parlor and closing it off from the hall passage on the north wall.

Further evidence of tampering with the stair could be seen on the second floor, where the original Federal-period turned newel was still in situ, but the second floor balustrade had been reworked, very likely from components of an earlier balustrade and with the individual balusters clearly of varying lengths. The balusters themselves were turned but neither of early 19th nor mid-20th-century character: they may have been installed in the 1863 move.

Also standing on the property is a one-and-a-half story, gable-roofed carriage house of uncertain construction date. Tax records indicate that a stable on the property was first taxed in 1881, but the Engineering Department House Book (Book 5, page 109) of 1871 shows an outbuilding of the same dimensions on the property as of that date. The carriage house is of frame construction with three entrance bays. Like the main house, it was covered in aluminum siding which has been removed and the clapboards repaired; the interior has been refitted for use as a three-car garage. The upper half-story is unfinished storage space. The carriage house appears to be in fair to good structural condition, with no obvious structural problems.

C. Current Photographs

III. History of the Property

A. Historic Development Patterns

1. Deed History of the Property

The Margaret Eustis House has a deed history on two parcels, the first at its original location at 1531 Massachusetts Avenue and the other at 114 Oxford Street, where it was moved in 1863.

1531 Massachusetts Avenue:

The property on which the Margaret Eustis House was constructed in 1822-23 was purchased by Margaret Eustis from William Cox on May 11, 1803 (Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, book 150, page 272) and located opposite Cambridge Common in the vicinity of Hastings Hall. It appears from the tax records that a small house (valued at between \$500 and \$700) stood on the lot from 1803 (or possibly 1807) until 1820 but in 1821, the tax valuation increased substantially to \$1800 and then again the next year to \$2400. The increase suggests the construction of a new house between 1821 and 1823.

Margaret Eustis, her son Abraham Eustis, or the Eustis heirs owned the property until October, 1858, when it was sold in a series of related transfers to William A. Saunders (Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, book 820, pages 436-438). Six weeks later, Saunders purchased several lots from the estate of William Frost, including lot 40, the property at what is now 114 Oxford Street (Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, book 830, page 87).

114 Oxford Street:

William A. Saunders, an amateur historian, hardware dealer, and son of Cambridge master builder William Saunders, moved the Eustis House to Oxford Street. Saunders' account book (in the collection of the Cambridge Historical Society) noted: ". . . House, that of Madam Eustis, moved by WAS in 1861, to the lot on the corner of Oxford & Eustis Place, afterward sold to Mr. Goodrow." Tax records for the property indicate it was taxed on its present location in 1863. It is not clear what may have transpired between Saunders' 1861 date and the 1863 tax record but the sale to "Mr. Goodrow" cited in Saunders' account book, which took place in June, 1868 (Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, book 1050, page 531), indicated the house had already been converted to a double house ("a double dwelling house and other buildings thereon").

By the terms of the 1868 deed, Eli Goodrow agreed that the property was "never to be used for any business or purpose whatsoever that shall fairly be judged detrimental or injurious to the value of the neighboring estates." Goodrow's heirs sold the house to Cambridge realtor James J. Conley in 1915 (Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, book 3984, page 122). The most recent owner/occupants, Allan and Mynue Korb, purchased the house in the 1940s. The heirs of the Korb estate sold the property in 2003 to M&B Realty Trust, which is developing the property for resale.

The two abutting properties at 116-118 Oxford Street and 1 Eustis Street share a history with 114 Oxford Street. Eli Goodrow had the double house at 116-118 Oxford Street constructed in 1889 (F.B. Furbish, architect/builder); the Cambridge Tribune (February 1, 1890) stated “Both tenements are to let, but ought not to want for occupants long, for the house is in a good neighborhood and of a most convenient interior arrangement.” M. L. and E. J. Goodrow were listed as owners of the house in 1930.

The house at 1 Eustis Street was also owned by Eli Goodrow. It was first taxed on that lot in 1882 but its form and appearance indicate that it, like 114 Oxford Street, was an older house moved to Eustis Street from another location. The 1883 footprint illustration of the house (Engineering Department House Book 21, page 19) shows the house lot for 1 Eustis awkwardly carved out of the southeast corner of the larger Goodrow lot, a subdivision that created the substantial setback non-conformity that characterizes the current dimensions of both the lot at 114 Oxford and that at 1 Eustis. Common ownership in the Goodrow family also explains the side-lot non-conformity created by the carriage house at 114 Oxford Street, which originally straddled the property line with 116-118 Oxford Street.

2. Development History of Parcel and Surroundings

The development history of the Margaret Eustis House property reflects the incremental, largely unplanned pattern of development that typified much of the Agassiz neighborhood. Historically, development of the neighborhood was limited by the generally awkward boundaries of this section of Cambridge, a tapering triangle of land formed by Massachusetts Avenue on the southwest and the Somerville city line on northeast. The 17th-century division of the land into long, narrow lots that fronted on Massachusetts Avenue and a complicated pattern of family ownership that kept large portions of the land off limits to development impeded the subdivision of this section until the end of the 19th century.

The potential of the Agassiz neighborhood for suburban development was suggested in three transportation improvements at mid-century: 1) the introduction of suburban rail service on the Fitchburg Railroad line at Porter Square in 1842, 2) the presence of the Harvard Branch Railroad (a spur of the Fitchburg that branched off toward Harvard Square at present-day Museum Street) between 1849 and 1855, and 3) the establishment of horsecar service on North Avenue (now Massachusetts Avenue) in 1856. In the area around the Eustis House, however, that potential was not realized until much later.

In 1851, the Eustis House’s owner, William A. Saunders, in concert with three other investors, began the acquisition of an 18-acre remnant of the Gideon Frost farm, an undeveloped triangular parcel that extended from just east of Massachusetts Avenue east to the city line. In 1858, the investors filed a subdivision plan that contained 47 lots, including lot 40, the parcel onto which Saunders had the Eustis House moved in 1861. As part of the subdivision, Eustis Street (originally known as Eustis Court) was laid out as far as Beacon Street but only along Saunders’ property on the north side. In 1889, it was widened to 40’, its present width.

Fifteen years after the subdivision, the 1873 atlas showed only scattered construction in the neighborhood east of Oxford Street. Many of the lots were low-lying and less convenient for homeowners, and in 1871, a three-story frame tannery to process animal hides into leather had been constructed 200 feet east of the Eustis House. Such activities polluted both the air and the ground water, and were usually prohibited by responsible residential developers. In 1899, architect/builder/developer R. Currie Grovestein razed the tannery and built 12 double houses on Traymore Street. The same group packed ten three-deckers and a two-family house onto half an acre on Arcadia, Eustis, and Harris streets, and the neighborhood behind the Eustis House filled in at roughly twice the density that would be allowed under the current zoning.

Eventually, the original 47 parcels of the Saunders, et. al. subdivision were redivided into over 100 building lots. The lack of a coordinated development strategy gave the neighborhood a pleasing diversity of ages and styles of houses, but also led to crowding on some blocks. By 1930, high-density and commercial uses characterized the east side of Oxford Street, including a livery stable (later rebuilt as an auto garage) opposite the Eustis House at 12 Eustis Street, a one-story storefront block at 102-104 Oxford Street, and stucco and brick apartment blocks at the corners of Oxford Street and Eustis, Prentiss, and Forest streets.

In the mid 20th century the neighborhood was too far from Harvard Square to attract the attention of the university, but was plagued instead by absentee owners who broke up the large single-family houses into single rooms and small apartments. The extension of the Red Line to Porter Square in 1986 made the area popular once more, and some houses were restored to single-family occupancy after the abolition of rent control in 1995.

B. Historic Photographs/Maps

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IV. Significance of the Property

A. Historical Significance

The historical significance of the Margaret Eustis House relates to the sequence of relocation and alteration that enabled the house's preservation, as well as to its associations with the Eustis, Goodrow and Korb families in Cambridge.

The house was constructed for Margaret (Parker) Eustis, the widow of Abraham Eustis, member of a prominent Massachusetts family and brother of Governor William Eustis (1823-25). Margaret Eustis was born in Boston in June, 1762, the daughter of Daniel and Margaret (Jarvis) Parker. She married Abraham Eustis (born April 26, 1757) on July 29, 1784. The couple relocated to Petersburg, Virginia south of Richmond and their only child, Abraham, was born in Petersburg on March 26, 1786. Abraham Eustis, senior, died in Petersburg two years later, on December 24, 1788.

It is unclear when Margaret and young Abraham returned to Boston, but in May, 1803, Margaret Eustis purchased land and a house on Massachusetts Avenue opposite Cambridge Common (book 150, page 272, Middlesex South Registry of Deeds). The house was intermittently present in the tax records between 1812 and 1820, always at a small value, suggesting it was an insubstantial property. Around this same time, Abraham Eustis was attending Harvard College, from which he received a B.A. in 1804. Abraham went on to receive both a B.A. and an M.A. from Bowdoin College in 1806.

Madame Eustis (as she seems to have been known in Cambridge) was also the sister of the Honorable Isaac Parker (1768-1830), an associate justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court who was first appointed in 1806 and who later served, from 1814 to 1830, as chief justice. Justice Parker took his nephew into his law practice and Abraham was admitted to the bar in 1807, practicing law in Boston. In 1808, Abraham entered the army as an artillery captain. The remainder of his career was as a soldier, serving in the War of 1812, in the Black Hawk war of 1832, and in the war with the Seminole in Florida in 1835.

Eustis was the founding commander of the army's Artillery School of Practice at Fort Monroe, Hampton, Virginia and in 1918, when the army established a coast artillery and balloon observation school nearby on Mulberry Island in the James River at Newport News, the camp was named Fort Eustis in his honor. At the time of his death in 1843, Abraham Eustis was a colonel of the First Artillery and Brevet Brigadier General.

Abraham Eustis married twice (1809, Rebecca Sprague, 1786-1820; 1822, Patience W.D. Izard, 1786-1860) and, by his first wife, had seven children, the youngest of whom, Henry Lawrence Eustis (1819-1885), also distinguished himself in a military career, as an engineer. Henry Lawrence Eustis (A.B., Harvard College, 1838) graduated at the top of his class at West Point (1842) and from 1842 to 1849 served in various engineering operations, helping to construct Fort Warren and Lovell's Island in Boston harbor, and

teaching engineering at West Point. He became a professor of engineering at Harvard in 1849, where he remained until his death. In the Civil War, he was colonel of the 10th Massachusetts Volunteers and brevetted brigadier general in 1863, having served through numerous actions. He organized the engineering department of Harvard's Lawrence Scientific School and was dean of the scientific faculty from 1871 to 1885. He also prepared the Genealogy of the Eustis Family (1878). He lived at 29 Kirkland Street (1851, Hovey & Ryder, demolished 1898), a three-story brick house at the corner of Divinity Avenue, on what was known as "Professor's Row." It is possible to speculate that Eustis was aware of William A. Saunders' efforts to preserve and relocate his grandmother's house.

William Augustus Saunders (1818-1899), a Boston hardware dealer and the son of a Cambridge master builder, was a dedicated historian of Cambridge and chronicler of its Revolutionary War relics and antiquities. For the 1875 centennial, he prepared a narrative history of his reminiscences of the topography, sites, structures, and personalities of Old Cambridge, including a house-by-house tour of Massachusetts Avenue north from the Common, the manuscript of which is in the possession of the Cambridge Historical Society. Saunders' history noted his removal of Madame Eustis' house to Oxford Street in 1861, along with numerous other smaller artifacts he salvaged for their associations with Cambridge's past.

As an antiquarian, Saunders was one of the city's earliest amateur local historians. (The Cambridge Historical Society, for example, was not founded until 1905, thirty years after Saunders wrote his history of Cambridge.) While it was not uncommon for old houses to be "preserved" through relocation in the 19th century, when building materials were more costly and valuable than the construction worker's labor, Saunders' strong interest in the city's history appears to have contributed to his intervention to save the Eustis House.

The Eustis House was owned until 1915 by the Goodrow family, whose patriarch, Eli Goodrow, purchased it from Saunders in 1868. Goodrow, listed in the 1868 directory as a "furniture packer" in Boston, living on Concord Avenue near the Arsenal, was, by 1870, listed as an assistant at the Zoological Museum at Harvard, and later as a janitor at the museum.

In a process that was typical for working class property owners in the 19th-century, Goodrow developed his property intensively, moving an older house onto the back of the property at 1 Eustis Street in 1882 and adding a double house on the adjacent lot at 116-118 Oxford Street in 1889. The additional properties generated rental income, allowed for members of the extended family to remain nearby, and made maximum use of the property. By 1890, the Goodrow property included five separate dwelling units on 14,000 square feet of land at Oxford and Eustis streets. Goodrow's extended family included a bookkeeper, a clerk, a "helper" at a building in Central Square, and the superintendent and matron of the City Home at North Cambridge.

The most recent owner/occupants of the property, Allan and Mynue Korb, were well-respected residents of the Agassiz neighborhood, maintaining a large garden that

beautified the busy corner for many years. Allan Korb was a constable in the City of Cambridge and an auctioneer.

B. Architectural Significance

The architectural significance of the Margaret Eustis House relates primarily to its period, style and method of construction.

The Margaret Eustis House is a good example of a type of residential construction that was nearly ubiquitous in Middlesex County in the late 18th and early 19th centuries: a five-bay wide, center-entrance house, two-bays deep, with a pair of chimneys on the rear wall and two rooms on either side of a center hall. Larger examples of this type could be three-stories tall, but two stories were typical; in more stylish examples, the house might have a low, hipped roof, but gable roofs were a standard option. The house could be, and most often was, extended through the addition of rear ells and the rear-wall chimneys often ended up in the midst of a welter of rear additions, but as the house could be sited either gable-end to the street (on narrow, usually urban, lots, for example) or with the ridge parallel to the street (in more open, agrarian settings), it offered a fair amount of flexibility in siting. While large numbers of these rear-wall chimney Federal houses survive outside Boston in the extended suburbs out to Route 495, in Cambridge, they are comparatively rare.

Very few houses were built in Cambridge in the period following the Revolution, in part because a severe economic depression resulting from the Jeffersonian Embargo of 1807 and the War of 1812 dampened local building, and in part because early 19th-century Cambridge was still a relative backwater. There may be as many as 130 pre-1830 houses standing in all of Cambridge, but of the period from 1790 to 1830, there are probably fewer than 40 houses surviving and even fewer of the modest vernacular construction of 114 Oxford Street. Examples of houses similar in period and style include the William Saunders House, 1 Garden Street (1820), the E. and S. Stedman House, 69 Dunster Street (1829), and the William Bates House (1821), 38 Bradbury Street.

All of these pre-1830 houses are framed of heavy-timber construction, in the vernacular tradition of wood-framed houses brought to the Massachusetts Bay colony by English settlers in the 17th century. The houses were framed with heavy timber sills and roof plates and braced corner posts, and with a roof composed of heavy purlins and rafters. The sturdiness of the major framing allowed for lighter interior partition walls. This system of house construction reflects a pre-industrial method of construction that was not fully displaced by modern balloon framing until the 1840s.

The Margaret Eustis House retains its original framing and many of its original exterior materials and finishes, as well as selected interior materials and finishes, all of which illustrate the artisanal, vernacular nature of this form of construction. The house is sided with narrow clapboards that were applied in a manner typical of the 18th-century: in this style of application, clapboards were laid up with a narrow exposure (about 3") at the base of the wall, increasing in width up the wall to the modern 4" exposure. The siding

includes many original clapboards, which can be identified by their short lengths and distinctive hand-planed “skived” joints (in a skived joint, the clapboard ends overlap one another rather than being butted up end-to-end).

On the interior, mouldings in the first floor parlor, including skirtboards, wainscoting, and window and door casings, are also hand-planed mouldings original to the 1822 construction. Other elements surviving from the original construction include the front entrance surround and door and a number of interior paneled doors.

In addition to its Federal period date, construction method, and materials, the Eustis House also reflects important patterns of historical development in the evolution of its current site. The relocation of the Eustis House to Oxford Street in the 1860s followed a common practice in the 19th century, where sites on established old streets, such as Massachusetts Avenue, were cleared for more intensive development as property values rose and new uses came in. In this instance, the Eustis House site was acquired by Harvard College and not redeveloped until the construction of Walter Hastings Hall (1888, Cabot & Chandler) in the North Yard.

The evolution of the 114 Oxford Street property is typical of a working-class, family-based development pattern seen more comprehensively in neighborhoods like the Upper Marsh and in the blocks behind the Harvard School on West Street in Mid Cambridge. In these less-than-prime locations, immigrant Irish families could purchase small lots onto which older houses could be moved and which could even be infilled with additional houses, or partitioned with short alleyways. The infill of the Goodrow lot with the house at 1 Eustis Street is an example of this practice, while the construction of the carriage house and double house at 116-118 Oxford demonstrates the practice of infilling for extended family use of a particular property. A Goodrow descendant lived at 118 Oxford Street, for example, into the 1950s.

V. Relationship to Criteria

A. Article III, Chapter 2.78.180 a.

The enabling ordinance for landmarks states:

The Historical Commission by majority vote may recommend for designation as a landmark any property within the City being or containing a place, structure, feature or object which it determines to be either (1) importantly associated with one or more historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, aesthetic, cultural, political, economic or social history of the City or the Commonwealth or (2) historically or architecturally significant (in terms of its period, style, method of construction or association with a famous architect or builder) either by itself or in the context of a group of structures . . .

B. Relationship of Property to Criteria

The Margaret Eustis House meets criterion (1) primarily for its associations with the broad architectural and social history of the City as a rare surviving example of Federal style architecture and for its sequence of preservation and redevelopment in the 1860s, and secondarily for the importance of its associations with three historic persons in Cambridge (Margaret Eustis, Abraham Eustis, and Henry Lawrence Eustis) and with the historically-significant Eustis and Parker families. It meets criterion (2) for its architectural significance in terms of its period, style, and method of construction. Despite having been moved from its original location, the Margaret Eustis House retains integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling. It conveys its original architectural qualities in its form, massing, and details.

VI. Recommendations

A. Article III, Chapter 2.78.140

The purpose of landmark designation is contained in the enabling ordinance, which is to:

preserve, conserve and protect the beauty and heritage of the City and to improve the quality of its environment through identification, conservation and maintenance of . . . sites and structures which constitute or reflect distinctive features of the architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the City; to resist and restrain environmental influences adverse to this purpose; [and] to foster appropriate use and wider public knowledge and appreciation of such . . . structures . . .

B. Preservation Options

Landmark designation or donation of a preservation easement are the only options for the permanent long-term protection and preservation of the Margaret Eustis House. It is not located in an area that would be recommended for local historic district designation. While it is adjacent to the Garfield Street National Register district, and would be eligible for individual listing on the National Register of Historic Places, National Register listing would not permanently protect and preserve the house. No plans are underway for neighborhood conservation district study in the area surrounding the property.

C. Staff Recommendation

It is the staff recommendation that the Commission find that the Margaret Eustis House meets the criteria for landmark designation and vote to recommend that the City Council designate the house as a protected landmark under Article III, Chapter 2.78.

VII. Standards and Criteria

A. Introduction

Under Article III, the Historical Commission is charged with reviewing any construction, demolition or alteration that affects the exterior architectural features (other than color) of a landmark. This report describes exterior architectural features that are among the characteristics that led to consideration of the property as a landmark. Except as the order designating or amending the landmark may otherwise provide, the exterior architectural features described in this report should be preserved and/or enhanced in any proposed alteration or construction that affects those features of the landmark. The standards following in paragraphs B and C of this section provide specific guidelines for the treatment of the landmark described in this report.

B. General Standards and Criteria

Subject to review and approval of exterior architectural features under the terms of this report, the following standards shall apply:

1. Significant historic and architectural features of the landmark shall be preserved.
2. Changes and additions to the landmark, which have taken place over time, are evidence of the history of the property and the neighborhood. These changes to the property may have acquired significance in their own right and, if so, that significance should be recognized and respected.
3. Deteriorated architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced.
4. When replacement of architectural features is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. New materials should, whenever possible, match the material being replaced in physical properties, design, color, texture, and appearance. The use of imitation replacement materials is discouraged.
6. The surface cleaning of a landmark shall be done by the gentlest possible means. Sandblasting and other cleaning methods that damage exterior architectural features shall not be used.
7. New additions shall not destroy significant exterior architectural features and shall not be incongruous to the historic aspects, architectural significance, or distinct character of the landmark, neighborhood, and environment.
8. New additions should be done in a way that if they were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the landmark should be unimpaired.

C. Suggested Review Guidelines

1. Site/Development Potential: future efforts to construct any remaining allowable square footage on the site should be focused first on the carriage house, where additional square footage may be captured in the existing accessory structure, and care should be taken not to further expand or enlarge the main house. The framing and finishes of the house should be considered significant artifacts of its history and protected to the extent possible from diminution or loss. Care should

- be taken to maintain the open, landscaped character of the yard immediately in front of the house and the side yard along Eustis Street.
2. Exterior materials should be preserved insofar as practicable. Special care should be taken to protect and maintain the clapboards, entrance surround, front door, and rake mouldings.
 3. Window placement and location is a critical element of the architectural character of the house. The north wall of the main house is particularly sensitive in this regard and the introduction of additional windows on that wall to “regularize” or make more symmetrical the fenestration of that elevation should be discouraged. The asymmetry of that elevation (which is still in its original, pre-1861 north orientation) should be considered an important artifact of the original construction.
 4. Future owners should be encouraged to maintain and preserve original interior materials and detailing.

VIII. Proposed Order

ORDERED:

That the Margaret Eustis House, 114 Oxford Street, be designated as a protected landmark pursuant to Chapter 2.78, Article III, Section 2.78.180 of the Code of the City of Cambridge, as recommended by vote of the Cambridge Historical Commission on October 2, 2003. The premises so designated are defined as parcels 89 and 110 of assessor's map 151 and recorded in book 38975, page 73 of the South Middlesex Registry of Deeds.

This designation is justified by the important historical associations the house embodies as a locally rare and substantially intact example of the rear-wall chimney Federal house, constructed in 1822 and preserved through relocation in 1868 and for its associations with the Eustis family in Cambridge and with Margaret, Abraham and Henry Lawrence Eustis in particular. The house is also historically and architecturally significant in terms of its period, style and method of construction, as one of a small number of heavy-timber-framed Federal period houses surviving in Cambridge.

The effect of this designation shall be that no construction activity can take place within the designated area, and no action can be taken affecting the appearance of 114 Oxford Street, that would in either case be visible from a public way, without review by the Cambridge Historical Commission and the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness, Hardship or Non-Applicability, as the case may be. In making determinations, the Commission shall be guided by the terms of the landmark designation report, and by Section VII, Standards and Criteria, of the landmark designation report, and by the applicable sections of Article 2.78.